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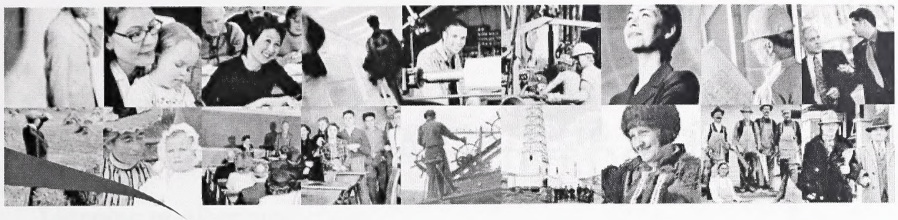

2005

# BUDGET

Investing in the Next Alberta

## 2005 - 06 Quarterly Budget Report

## Q3 Activity Report

February 2006

Alberta

# Updating Albertans

In 2004, the government introduced its 20-year strategic plan to build on the province's strong fiscal and economic environment and create more opportunities for Albertans and Alberta businesses to succeed. *Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Promise* is the action plan that will help the government achieve its vision of: "A vibrant and prosperous province where Albertans enjoy a superior quality of life and are confident about the future for themselves and their children." The strategic plan is based on four pillars:

- **Unleashing innovation** focuses on becoming a world leader in innovation, research, development, and commercialization of new ideas.
- **Leading in learning** requires making sure Albertans have the opportunities they need to learn, adapt, and develop new knowledge and new skills.
- **Competing in a global marketplace** is about creating a business and investment environment that is recognized around the world as an excellent place to do business.
- **Making Alberta the best place to live, work and visit** means attracting people to come to Alberta because it provides an environment in which they can contribute their talents and create a quality of life that meets their dreams.

The purpose of this quarterly activity report is to show Albertans what activities the government undertook over the past three months in support of this vision. The following pages include some of those activities from each of the government departments.

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## LISTENING TO ALBERTANS

Government activities are often influenced by the input received from Albertans. Through public consultations, surveys, letters, phone calls, and e-mails, Albertans share their concerns with and indicate what they expect from government. In the third quarter, Albertans had a say as government:

- **co-ordinated** Alberta's participation in a very successful First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues. The meeting took place in Kelowna on November 24 and 25, 2005. Key agenda items discussed were relationships, health, housing, education, and economic opportunities. (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, AAND)

- **gathered** input from post-secondary stakeholders through the *A Learning Alberta* Minister's Forum and pledged action in three priority areas: learning foundations, support for Aboriginal learning, and transforming the advanced learning system. (Advanced Education)

- **unveiled** an early childhood development and childcare investment plan for children aged six and under. This new plan will help make childcare more affordable for Alberta families and improve access to early childhood development opportunities. A toll-free phone line – 1-866-714-KIDS(5437) – was also established to provide families with information on available early childhood development and childcare programs. (Children's Services)

- **organized** a second round of Ministerial meetings with trustees and superintendents from Alberta's 62 public, separate, and francophone school boards on issues of importance to them during the Minister of Education's tour of 16 Alberta centres in October and November. Receptions to meet with teachers and parents were held in 11 centres following the school board meetings. (Education)

- **consulted** with parents and other education stakeholders on literacy and numeracy development for children in Kindergarten to Grade 3, to reinforce Alberta Education's commitment to ensuring Alberta's young students have the essential foundation skills for later success in learning. (Education)

- **completed** the first stage of an extensive consultation process with AltaLink and affected landowners regarding a proposed transmission line between Edmonton and Calgary. In total, more than 500 landowners attended AltaLink's open house information sessions, which were held at various locations in December 2005. (Energy)

- **presented** the draft *South Saskatchewan River Basin Water Management Plan* to local MLAs, followed by public review of the draft plan. A Treaty 7 First Nations consultant has been retained to provide technical capacity and support in the review of the draft plan. Concerns raised during consultations will be compiled in a report and considered before the plan is finalized. (Environment)

- **held** six *Youth Consultation Workshops* between November 24 and December 2, 2005, to engage young Albertans between the ages of 16 and 25 from different regions of the province in discussions about environmental issues. They expressed their environmental priorities and provided advice to Alberta Environment. Feedback was also received from 275 youth from around the province through an online survey. (Environment)

- **released** details on the *Alberta Resource Rebate* program, part of the Government of Alberta's strategy for managing this fiscal year's unanticipated resource revenue. Approximately $1.3 billion will be distributed, with every eligible man, woman, and child receiving a $400 resource rebate cheque. (Finance)

- **presented** the *Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund* (AHSTF) update at this year's AHSTF open house. The purpose of the annual open house is to report to Albertans on the activities and results of the AHSTF and answer questions on its performance. Each year, the meeting is held in a different location throughout the province in an effort to involve as many Albertans as possible. This year's meeting was held in Calgary. (Finance)

- **provided** advice and information on registry and consumer topics to 40,603 Albertans through the Alberta Government Services toll-free call centre and another 2,736 Albertans, who contacted the department by e-mail. Also provided advice and information on natural gas and electricity topics to 524 Albertans through the Utilities Consumer Advocate toll-free customer information centre. (Government Services)

- **hosted** a Minister's Forum, *Developing a World Class Labour Force*, at which more than 100 people provided input on a strategy to address labour force issues. (Human Resources and Employment, HRE)

- **accepted** 30 recommendations from the MLA committee conducting a review of the *Local Authorities Election Act*. The recommendations will empower local decision-making and improve the municipal election process. (Municipal Affairs)

- **visited** 31 municipalities throughout Alberta to consult with chief administrative officers about projects funded under the *2005 Municipal Sponsorship Program* and to gather feedback about the program. (Municipal Affairs)

- **held** 11 public meetings across Alberta to seek public input on the legislative review of the *Dependent Adults Act* and *Personal Directives Act*. Close to 300 interested Albertans attended.
(Seniors and Community Supports; Justice)

- **completed** a governance review of the Natural Resources Conservation Board that will ensure the province's confined feeding industry is administered more responsively and effectively.
(Sustainable Resource Development, SRD)

## UNLEASHING INNOVATION/COMPETING IN A GLOBAL MARKETPLACE

Albertans are pioneers - known for innovative thinking and a "can do" attitude. It's this spirit that makes Alberta a leader on so many fronts. Focusing on research, technology, and innovation will allow Albertans to maximize traditional industries and broaden Alberta's economy. Low taxes and the availability of untapped markets to export and promote our goods, services, knowledge, and technology play a vital part in achieving recognition as an excellent place to do business. Making Alberta's infrastructure the best in the world is also important, so citizens and businesses have the foundation they need to compete in a global marketplace. In the third quarter, the government:

- **implemented** a $224 million on-the-ground pilot project to facilitate improvements to the Canadian *Agricultural Income Stabilization* program for Alberta producers. (Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, AFRD)

- **signed** an agreement on value-added agricultural processing and product development with Heilongjiang province in China. Key elements include the development of a food-processing centre in Heilongjiang and a joint brand that both Chinese and Alberta companies can use to market products in both Asian and North American markets. (AFRD)

- **hosted** the first cross-country ski world cup event in Alberta in 16 years at the renewed Canmore Nordic Centre. An estimated worldwide audience of 50-70 million watched the *Alberta Centennial World Cup 2005*. (Community Development)

- **released** information about the economic impact of Alberta's cultural sites in *2005 Report: Economic Impact of Provincial Heritage Facilities in Alberta.* Alberta's cultural facilities and historic sites generate more than $70 million in economic benefits and 1,100 permanent jobs annually. (Community Development)

- **committed** a $35 million centennial investment from the provincial surplus to the Calgary Zoo's *Project Discovery.* The project will allow the zoo to further assert itself as a world leader in tourism, education, and conservation. (Community Development)

- **held** the fifth-annual *Remediation Technologies Symposium* in Banff. The symposium focused on the latest innovations in soil and groundwater remediation, including in-situ, ex-situ, biological, and non-biological treatment methods. Participation has grown from 225 delegates to nearly 500 delegates from across the western hemisphere. (Economic Development)

- **launched** a new marketing initiative, the *Heavy Oil Alberta Project* (HOAP). HOAP specifically addresses the opportunity to market Alberta's niche technologies in heavy oil extraction, production, and processing in the global marketplace. It will focus world attention on Alberta being an international leader in heavy oil equipment and services, leading to increased exposure for Alberta's trade and investment initiatives. (Economic Development; Energy)

- **improved** access to *Registered Apprenticeship Program* (RAP) registrations through the development of a new, online form and awarded a record number of RAP scholarships, which are used to fund apprenticeship training after high school. A total of 226 high school graduates received a $1,000 RAP Scholarship in 2005, up from the 50 scholarships awarded in 2004. (Education; Advanced Education)

- **announced** that revenues from the sale of petroleum and natural gas land leases and licenses reached an all-time high in 2005, with the province adding $2.3 billion to its coffers. The revenues generated from these land leases and licences benefit all Albertans by contributing significant funding for priority programs such as health, education, and infrastructure. (Energy)

- **established** an MLA advisory committee on electric infrastructure to ensure the province's transmission system expands at the pace required to meet the needs of Alberta's growing economy and population. The committee will advise the Minister of Energy about implementing the plan to upgrade or expand various parts of the transmission system so the regulatory approval process for transmission development and land access can proceed constructively. (Energy)

- **announced** 13 pilot and demonstration projects that will advance technology to aid in the development of existing and new oil, natural gas, and in-situ reserves during the first phase of Alberta Energy's *Innovative Energy Technologies Program.* (Energy)

- **participated** in the *United Nations Climate Change Conference* in Montreal, promoting Alberta's leadership role in climate change. (Environment; Innovation and Science)

- **released** the progress report *Achieving Commitments in the Provincial/Territorial Memorandum of Understanding Regarding Securities Regulation* (MOU), which outlines the results achieved in 2005. The MOU, signed by every province and territory except Ontario, represents an unprecedented commitment to implementing a passport system for an improved securities regulatory framework. (Finance)

- **released** an interim report showing that during the first eight months of the *Alberta Hip and Knee Replacement Project*, the new care pathway is meeting its goal of ensuring patients receive surgery within four months of their initial consultation, greatly reducing wait times. (Health and Wellness)

- **introduced** a cross-government policy to attract and retain immigrants to help address skill shortages and support the successful transition of immigrants into Alberta's economic, social, and cultural life. The policy includes improving the processing time for foreign-credential recognition and offering more training to address skill gaps. (HRE)

- **created** the *Strategic Transportation Advisory Committee* to review and provide advice on a broad range of provincial transportation issues. This external advisory committee was brought together to assist the Alberta government in planning the future of transportation in the province and to provide input into the long-term vision necessary to address Alberta's transportation challenges. (Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **received** national recognition for the innovative approach to building the Anthony Henday Drive Southeast, the province's first road to be constructed as a public-private partnership (P3). Not only will this road help to significantly reduce traffic congestion in Edmonton, but it will also serve as a model of excellence for future P3 projects. (Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **provided** $2.6 million in equipment grants to assist Alberta researchers with setting up their first labs. The *Small Equipment Grants Program* helps researchers set up their labs by investing in key equipment purchases. The grants awarded under the 2005 competition are funding 18 different projects in areas as diverse as improved agriculture products, better paediatric medicines, and more efficient pipelines. (Innovation and Science)

- **announced** $2.5 million to fund a new biotech "wet lab" at the Edmonton Research Park. The Biotechnology Business Development Centre (BBDC) will provide low-cost shared lab space to help growing biotechnology companies develop their products. Other partners in the facility are Western Economic Diversification Canada and the City of Edmonton. Construction on the BBDC is slated to start in spring 2006. (Innovation and Science)

- **provided** $1.2 million in funding for a new satellite ground station, located at the University of Lethbridge. The Alberta Terrestrial Imaging Centre will be North America's primary receiving and distribution centre for images taken through a special satellite technology, known as SPOT. Images collected by SPOT satellites have a higher resolution and can provide better information about changes taking place on the land below, making it a useful decision-making tool in areas as diverse as emergency response, energy pipeline monitoring, pine beetle containment, and watershed research. (Innovation and Science)

- **announced** $15 million for 17 projects under the government's *Innovation Program*. The projects focus on value-added agriculture, fire prevention, sustainable resource planning, climate change, energy production, and improved delivery of government services to Albertans. (Innovation and Science)

- **signed** an agreement to create the Alberta-Heilongjiang Harbin Institute of Technology Research Innovation Centre, establishing a foundation for new partnerships between researchers in Alberta and China. While the Centre will be a physical facility in China, it will be "virtual" to Alberta and involve researchers at the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary, working with Chinese researchers on projects in the areas of data technology, knowledge research, and innovation development. (Innovation and Science)

- **named** leading scientists and entrepreneurs to the board of the new Alberta Life Sciences Institute, to provide leadership for research and technology commercialization in the areas of health, agriculture, forestry, water, and the environment. (Innovation and Science)

- **participated**, as part of the Canadian delegation, in the sixth *World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference*, in Hong Kong. Negotiations resulted in modest gains in reducing trade barriers and a commitment to develop a framework by April 30, 2006 for agricultural trade liberalization, an Alberta priority. (International and Intergovernmental Relations, IIR)

- **enhanced** Alberta's relationships with its sister-provinces Gangwon, Korea, and Hokkaido, Japan. To mark Alberta's centennial, a six-member Japanese government delegation, along with 26 representatives from towns, schools, and other areas with Alberta ties, visited Alberta. The governor of Gangwon presented Alberta with a pavilion built on the grounds of the Royal Alberta Museum. (IIR)

- **recognized** 32 teams of public service employees from across government for demonstrating outstanding business excellence and client service practices, during the 11th annual *Premier's Award of Excellence Ceremony*. (Personnel Administration Office, PAO)

## LEADING IN LEARNING

Albertans know a solid education builds the foundation for a strong and prosperous society. Alberta's education system continues to be among the best in the world and staying at the forefront means providing students with the tools they need to achieve their potential. Investments in universities, colleges, and technical institutes are increasing, so they can provide high quality, affordable post-secondary education. This, in turn, creates opportunities for life-long learners to adapt their skills and develop new ones. A well-educated workforce is key to Alberta's continued economic success. In the third quarter, the government:

- **invested** an additional $500 million from this year's surplus in the *Advanced Education Endowment Fund*, as part of the Alberta government's commitment to saving today's non-renewable resource revenues for future Albertans. The endowment fund will now have $750 million in 2005/06, which will provide millions of additional dollars in the years ahead to launch new and innovative post-secondary initiatives. (Advanced Education)

- **approved** operating funding of $46.8 million over four years for the University of Calgary's new Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. The new veterinary school will coordinate with other provincial animal medicine programs in universities and colleges throughout Alberta and Western Canada. The three-year program is expected to graduate 30 veterinarians each year. (Advanced Education)

- **committed** $47 million in capital funding from this year's surplus to Bow Valley College for the first phase of a major redevelopment at its downtown campus. The project will create hundreds of new spaces in programs that prepare people for successful transitions into the post-secondary system and the workforce. (Advanced Education)

- **committed** more than $10 million through the *Access Growth Fund* to create more than 1,000 additional post-secondary spaces in the province this year. An additional $1.7 million from the province will help boost access to distance and online learning opportunities. (Advanced Education)

- **funded** a new national scholarship program as a centennial gift to Canadians. The *Alberta Centennial Scholarships Program* will provide 325 scholarships annually, worth $2,005 each, to post-secondary students across Canada. Awards will be provided to 25 students from each province and territory, including Alberta, beginning in 2006. (Advanced Education)

- **extended** the Alberta *Centennial Education Savings Plan* grant to more Alberta students. A legislative amendment will mean any eight, 11 or 14 year old Alberta student will be eligible to receive the matching $100 grants. Under previous legislation, only children born in 2005 or beyond were eligible. (Advanced Education)

- **held** the first *World Conference for the Prevention of Family Violence* in Banff from October 23 to 26, 2005. More than 1,000 international leaders, researchers, and policy and program experts from 30 countries gathered to share best practices and learn about family violence prevention and intervention, as well as support and follow-up for victims. (Children's Services)

- **hosted** *Protecting Futures, Creating Hope*, a symposium on child and youth sexual exploitation. The symposium brought together more than 200 stakeholders and service delivery partners from across Alberta to share best practices, new information, and research. Delegates discussed how to improve services to meet the changing face of child sexual exploitation in Alberta and how to end the sexual abuse of our youth. (Children's Services)

- **developed and distributed** the first issue of a targeted, sector-specific newsletter for Alberta's metal fabricators. The newsletter includes information on programs and initiatives led by Alberta Economic Development and other Alberta government departments, global steel trends, a calendar of events, and spotlights on successful Alberta companies. Initial feedback from readers has been extremely positive. (Economic Development)

- **delivered** the *International Financial Institutions Bootcamp Workshop* in co-operation with Western Economic Diversification, Calgary Economic Development, Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, Manitoba Trade and Investment, and other private-sector partners. This five-day intensive workshop focused on how to sharpen participants' proposal writing skills and how to pursue projects funded by International Financial Institutions. (Economic Development)

- **launched** a video series on LearnAlberta.ca, featuring Aboriginal community leaders, to support the Aboriginal Studies program and infusion of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit perspectives into the Social Studies curriculum, along with new digital resources to support pure and applied high school mathematics courses. (Education)

- **celebrated** *Waste Reduction Week* from October 17 to 23, 2005. Public awareness and outreach events were held across the province to educate Albertans on waste reduction and recycling practices. All Grade 4 classes in Alberta were invited to participate in the *Reduce Your "Waste" Line* contest. (Environment)

- **partnered** with Piikani Employment Services on a roughneck training program for Piikani, Tsuu T'ina, and Siksika Nations members. Thirty members completed 24 days of roughneck training at the Bear Drilling Training facility near Red Deer. This is the first time the three First Nations collaborated on a single training initiative. (HRE)

- **celebrated** *Science and Technology Week* from October 7 to 16, 2005, with events held across the province. The purpose of the annual event is to encourage Alberta students to consider careers in science and technology and become part of the province's innovation community. (Innovation and Science)

- **provided** the final two in a series of SuperNet workshop sessions (Fort MacLeod, Cold Lake). These workshops, in partnership with local Regional Economic Development Alliances, offered Alberta SuperNet learning opportunities for more than 350 community leaders and business owners. (Restructuring and Government Efficiency)

## MAKING ALBERTA THE BEST PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND VISIT

Albertans' vision is one in which the province remains debt-free, with accessible, quality health care and education, safe and caring communities, and an environment that is preserved and protected. Alberta is a place that has something for everyone. The province is known for its spectacular scenery, rich cultural heritage, and exciting history. Those attractions draw visitors from around the world and keep them coming back year after year. In the third quarter, the government:

### Promoting Health and Wellness

- **supported** representatives from each of three current pilot site communities (Lethbridge and surrounding First Nations, High Prairie and surrounding Métis Settlements, and Eden Valley First Nation) to attend and present at a national conference on suicide prevention. (AAND)

- **launched** the 2005 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder adult awareness campaign. This campaign informs all Albertans that there is no cure for alcohol-related birth defects and brain damage, and that there is no safe time to drink when planning a pregnancy, during pregnancy or while breastfeeding. It also encourages others to support the healthy choices of pregnant women. (Children's Services)

- **introduced** a pilot *Safety Passport* program to provide schools with a comprehensive toolkit and binder to help teachers demonstrate to students how to keep classrooms and worksites safe. (Education; HRE)

- **launched** *It's in Your Hands*, a public awareness campaign aimed at increasing Albertans' confidence in their ability to recognize, prevent, and treat influenza, and to know when to access the health system. (Health and Wellness)

- **announced** $1.4 billion in funding for the construction of new buildings, renovations, and expansion of existing care facilities. This investment will lead to lowered wait times and increased bed capacity across the province. (Health and Wellness; Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **committed** $75 million in funding to expand Alberta's mental health services. Thirty new projects will be implemented, ranging from outreach programs to day treatment and crisis intervention services. (Health and Wellness)

- **established** the *Premier's Award for Healthy Workplaces*, celebrating Alberta employers who understand the positive effects of health promotion programs and have invested in their employees' well-being. (Health and Wellness)

- **implemented** changes to the *Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped* (AISH) program, including the introduction of Personal Income Support Benefits to help clients meet extra needs such as caring for a guide animal, special diets, and emergency travel, and the increasing of AISH employment income exemptions to allow clients to keep more of the money they earn from working. (Seniors and Community Supports)

## Supporting Families and Children

- **agreed** to transfer the administration and control of not less than 5,140 acres of unoccupied provincial Crown lands, including mines and minerals, to the federal government, to be set apart as Indian reserve for the use and benefit of the Alexander First Nation. (AAND)

- **supported** the *Aboriginal Mentoring Pilot Project* by encouraging pilot site communities (Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Blood Reserve/Kainai, Métis Nation Association - Region III, and the Paul Band First Nation) to attend an information sharing and training day on the Blood Tribe reserve. The pilot project is a provincial strategy designed to increase the number of Aboriginal mentors in the province and to learn more about how mentoring works in Aboriginal communities. (AAND)

- **transferred** to the federal government the administration and control of not less than 20,000 acres of unoccupied provincial Crown lands, including mines and minerals, to be set apart as Indian reserve for the use and benefit of the Fort McKay First Nation. (AAND)

- **launched** *Family Violence Prevention Month*, which takes place every November in Alberta. This year's theme, *It's Your Business*, sent the message that family violence has no boundaries - it affects all cultures, income levels, and faith groups. Through this awareness campaign, all Albertans were encouraged to take action to prevent family violence. (Children's Services)

- **extended** the *Natural Gas Rebate Program* to include October as a rebate month, providing further price protection to Alberta natural gas consumers. (Energy)

- **extended** shelter money to more Albertans getting assistance through Alberta Works. With the change, all Albertans receiving income support qualify for a $100 shelter benefit if they live with family. (HRE)

- **partnered** with the City of Edmonton and the University of Alberta on the *Families First Edmonton* research project, which aims to find the best way to deliver services to families with low incomes. Each of the 1,200 participant families will be linked to a combination of health, education, recreation, and social services, and will test different models of service delivery. The $10-million project will take five years to complete. (HRE)

- **proclaimed** new legislation that puts children first when family relationships break down or parents separate. The *Family Law Act* gives clear guidelines on the rights and responsibilities of family members, focuses on the best interests of the child, and encourages mediation and dispute resolution to settle family law disputes to avoid going to court. (Justice)

- **introduced** legislation to provide compensation for a child who sustains prenatal injuries as a result of his/her mother's negligent driving. (Justice)

- **released** the 2005-06 edition of the *Seniors Programs and Services Information Guide*, the ministry's flagship information source for 345,000 seniors throughout the province. (Seniors and Community Supports)

## Building Stronger and Safer Communities

- **unveiled** the *Great Kids* centennial display in the Legislature pedway. Each year, the Government of Alberta recognizes Alberta children and youth between the ages of five and 18 who do great things for their families, schools, and communities. This display highlights the generosity, compassion, and spirit of the province's youth. (Children's Services)

- **recognized** 100 influential Albertans with the one-time *Alberta Centennial Salute for Sport and Recreation Award* for their commitment and contributions to the development of sport and recreation in Alberta. (Community Development)

- **delivered** a series of regional labour information seminars. The purpose of the seminars was to provide the Regional Economic Development Alliances and individual communities with necessary background information to develop an appropriate strategy to address labour shortages. (Economic Development; HRE)

- **initiated** three projects designed to support Aboriginal entrepreneurs, including a custom series of business management workshops, videos featuring successful Aboriginal business leaders, and training for Aboriginal business service providers in the use of the business-planning tool *Rocket Fuel for Your Biz.* (Economic Development)

- **published** *The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools* to support learning about cultures that promote civility and ethical behaviour. (Education)

- **launched** a new 17-month *Alberta Lottery Fund* (ALF) awareness strategy to continue increasing awareness about the benefits of ALF in Alberta communities. (Gaming)

- **hosted** the *Alberta Roundtable on Violence in and around Licensed Premises.* The two-day forum brought together police services, municipalities, bar owners, and government to look for ways to reduce violence in and around licensed premises.
(Gaming; Solicitor General and Public Security)

- **issued** more than 350 *Community Facility Enhancement Program* and *Community Initiatives Program* grants through the *Alberta Lottery Fund.* These grants support various projects throughout the province, including funding for an expansion of the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre ($956,000), program development for the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada ($75,000), and computer purchases and technology upgrades for the Northern Alberta Crippled Children's Foundation ($4,446). (Gaming)

- **announced** the *Alberta Consumer Champion Awards* to recognize individuals, businesses, and organizations that demonstrate their commitment to promoting fairness in the Alberta marketplace.
(Government Services)

- **entered** into a pilot partnership with British Columbia Vital Statistics Agency, Canada Revenue Agency, Passport Canada, Statistics Canada, and Public Works Canada to exchange relevant vital event information in real time. This project aims to ensure the security, accuracy, and consistency of personal information across multiple provincial and federal databases and to ensure that secure identity documents are issued only to authorized individuals. (Government Services)

- **issued** consumer alerts to Alberta consumers and businesses about new scams involving counterfeit cheques and money orders that arrive unsolicited or in response to advertisements and how to safely shop on the Internet during the Christmas season.
(Government Services)

- **hosted** the *Moving Forward with Work Safe Alberta* forum to review progress on the province-wide strategy to reduce the provincial lost-time claim rate. More than 180 people participated. (HRE)

- **opened** a six-kilometre section of Edmonton's southwest ring road between Lessard Road and Terwillegar Drive. The new road is another major step toward completion of the vital southwest leg of Edmonton's ring road. The Alberta government's total investment in the southwest ring road is approximately $245 million.
(Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **announced** the installation of a new barrier system on northern sections of the Deerfoot Trail to prevent vehicles from crossing the road's median into oncoming traffic. The new barrier system is intended to prevent fatalities and serious injuries associated with head-on collisions at highway speeds.
(Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **proclaimed** a new law requiring drivers to slow down when passing emergency vehicles, tow trucks, and construction workers. The new law, which doubles the fines for speeding in these instances, will make roads safer for police officers, firefighters, ambulance workers, tow truck operators, and construction workers, as well as motorists.
(Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **published** a new handbook for police and Crown prosecutors to help them investigate and prosecute family violence cases. The 160-page *Domestic Violence Handbook for Police and Crown Prosecutors* provides information on investigative procedures, prosecutions, victims and abusers, risk factors, and safety planning. Guidelines for developing a domestic violence protocol for police services in Alberta were distributed for use with the handbook. All police and Crown prosecutors in Alberta received a copy of the handbook.
(Justice; Solicitor General and Public Security)

- **implemented** a $1.3 million disaster recovery program to assist the municipalities and residents of the City of Lloydminster, County of Vermilion River (including all other municipalities within the borders of the county), and the Town of Wainwright with the cost of uninsurable overland flood damage caused by heavy rainfall that occurred from August 23 to 25, 2005.
(Municipal Affairs)

- **approved** 77 grants totaling $5.65 million under the *2005 Municipal Sponsorship Program*. The program promotes excellence, cooperation, and innovation in local government. (Municipal Affairs)

- **implemented** a $450,000 disaster recovery program to assist the City of Wetaskiwin and its residents with the cost of uninsurable overland flood damage caused by severe rainstorms on August 25 and 30, 2005. (Municipal Affairs)

- **supported** the establishment of the Métis Fire Chiefs Association. The association is committed to promoting fire prevention and education activities to reduce the risk of fire and injury in Métis communities. (Municipal Affairs)

- **celebrated** the Alberta Public Service's centennial by undertaking two initiatives to recognize the significant role provincial government employees have played in helping build a strong province - the creation of a commemorative photo book showing images of the public service at work over the last century and the commissioning of an original piece of art, currently displayed in the Legislature Rotunda, reflecting the commitment and achievements of past and present public service employees. (PAO)

- **committed** $140 million in funding to support the development or upgrading of approximately 4,200 supportive living, affordable housing, and seniors housing units in Alberta. (Seniors and Community Supports)

- **announced** a pilot project to monitor low-risk offenders through the use of electronic bracelets. The pilot project in Edmonton involved 40 offenders serving weekend sentences. The project started at the end of September and will run for one year. (Solicitor General and Public Security)

- **agreed** in principle with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), the Government of Alberta, and the Government of Canada, to a *Community Tripartite Policing Agreement* for the community of Hobbema, which boosted the community's RCMP detachment to 32 officers. The additional officers will allow the RCMP to work with community leaders to proactively target the root causes of gang-related crime. (Solicitor General and Public Security)

- **awarded** approximately $200,000 in project funding to seven communities in forested areas of the province to help protect people and property from the potential impacts of wildfire. (SRD; Municipal Affairs)

- **developed** new criteria for *Forest Management Agreement* renewals that recognize industry involvement in activities that contribute to the sustainability of Alberta's forests, forest industry, and forest communities. (SRD)

## Protecting Alberta's Natural and Cultural Heritage

- **authored and published** two documents to assist government officials and others working with First Nations, Métis Settlements, and Aboriginal communities: *A Guide to Aboriginal Organizations in Alberta and Profiles: Métis Settlements and First Nations.* (AAND)

- **showcased** Alberta's agricultural entrepreneurs during *Small Business Week*, from October 17 to 23, 2005. Many agricultural entrepreneurs make a significant contribution to our province's economy and get their start through programs and services offered through Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. (AFRD)

- **allocated** $15 million to the Edmonton Art Gallery as part of the province's centennial investment to support the facility's growing role in highlighting art, culture, and creativity in the province. (Community Development)

- **partnered** with the Suncor Energy Foundation and the Alberta Conservation Association to establish the *Boreal Habitat Conservation Initiative.* The initiative will help protect northern forests by acquiring ecologically significant parcels of boreal habitat for public conservation. (Community Development)

- **completed** the Forecasting Centre Hotsite, a back-up site for use in flood forecasting emergencies. The hotsite is a mirror image of the facility previously used by flow forecasters. It allows forecasting operations to continue while renovations are made to the original site and will also provide necessary back-up services. The flood forecasting centre provides important information to dam operators, municipalities, and others for responding to flooding events. (Environment)

- **provided** $70 million to Edmonton Northlands and Calgary Exhibition & Stampede from this year's provincial surplus as part of the province's investment in centennial projects. These one-time capital grants will be used for facility upgrades. (Gaming)

- **granted** $1 million from the *Alberta Lottery Fund* to the Calgary Military Museums Society to assist with the expansion of the Museum of the Regiments building. (Gaming)

- **renamed** Highway 36 the Veterans Memorial Highway. This highway is a lasting tribute to the men and women who have fought to defend this province, our country, and our freedom, and who continue to risk their lives in peacekeeping activities around the world. (Infrastructure and Transportation)

- **launched** the *Trees of Renown* program to protect trees of historic, environmental or general significance located on Alberta's public land. (SRD)

- **took** aggressive action to control chronic wasting disease through a quota hunt, a targeted deer cull, and extensive public communications. (SRD)

- **implemented** new standards for provincial zoos to improve animal care and the public safety of visitors. (SRD)

- **expanded** the *Caribou Cowboy Program* in west-central Alberta as part of Alberta's management efforts to conserve woodland caribou. Aimed at reducing vehicle collisions with caribou traveling on Highway 40, the program includes public outreach and education and promotes the development of industry partnerships to help support the initiative. (SRD)

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